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Attachments:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

American Legion renews fight for veterans 'penalized for their wounds'

WASHINGTON (Feb. 4, 2011) - The American Legion is calling for swift congressional action on pending legislation that would eliminate the practice of concurrent receipt, often referred to as the "disabled veterans tax."

Currently, retired veterans who are compensated for service-connected injuries are getting equivalent amounts of their disability pay deducted from their retirement pay.

"Depending on how you look at it," said Jimmie L. Foster, national commander of The American Legion, "men and women who have spent their careers defending our freedoms, and get hurt doing it, are either penalized for their wounds or for their long service. Either way, it's wrong."

Provisions now in effect will partially resolve the issue of concurrent receipt; but not soon enough, says the Legion. A 10-year phase-in of full retirement and disability payments, which began on Jan. 1, 2004, will be completed by Dec. 31, 2013. But it will apply only to those who have received a Department of Veterans Affairs disability rating of at least 50 percent.

The American Legion has called for immediate cessation of the disabled veterans tax. The country's largest veterans service organization wants those who have served to receive all the benefits they have already earned - regardless of their disability ratings.

"Why should veterans who were injured in wartime be denied their benefits because they have a disability rating that's less than 50 percent?" Foster asked. "Even if you've got a 10 percent disability rating, that's 10 percent of yourself. It's a permanent sacrifice you've made for America."

Two pieces of corrective legislation favored by the Legion that lay dormant in last year's congressional session are now being resurrected: the Retired Pay Restoration Act and the Disabled Veterans Termination Act.

"The 112th Congress should act quickly to pass these measures and put an end, once and for all, to the disabled veterans tax," Foster said. "Our veterans, especially those who have given many years of service to our country and have also been injured, shouldn't be penalized for their sacrifices."

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